

# Angel of the City

Written by dreamkatcha. Any related videos, as always, can be found on my YouTube channel.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic resources generously provided by immensely talented emulator authors, and communities such as Hall of Light, Lemon Amiga, Lemon 64, World of Spectrum, Moby Games, World of Longplays and Recorded Amiga Games. Thank you for your tireless dedication to preserving the history of gaming.

-----

In yonder dark and distant days of yore, it was all too common for game critics not to bother watching movies associated with the licensed titles they reviewed. They'd be sent a pre-release copy of the game to scrutinise, yet not the corresponding celluloid source material. If they sought to connect the dots for the audience, or analyse how well it had been translated they'd have to do it on their own time, usually involving a trip to the cinema and a cash-point. Unless it was something that piqued the author's interest on a personal level, the upshot would be the briefest of reviews opening with "I've not seen the movie, but..." followed by a smattering of perfunctory pop-culture knowledge and speculation on what it might entail. You can't blame them, there was no Netflix back then.

This won't come as a Richter scale breaking shock to anyone who used to subscribe to any of the magazine stalwarts of the industry such as The One, Amiga Power, Crash, Zzap, Commodore User, Your Sinclair, Amstrad Action and so on. What *is* unusual is for the developers of the licensed games in question to *also* swerve doing their homework, so when you stumble across a game that seems to bear no relation to the instigating IP whatsoever you really have to wonder if those responsible were as in the dark as the critics.



One such example being the game based on the lesser-known - and possibly best *forgotten* - Sly Stallone slasher vehicle, *Cobra*. Released in 1986 to coincide with the VHS release of the movie, an 8-bit game was produced in-house by Ocean Software and made available for the three most significant platforms of the era, the ZX Spectrum, Commodore 64, and Amstrad CPC.



It's a scrolling shooty beat 'em up platformer similar to Green Beret. Typical of the kind designed to accompany action movie licences seeing as they were quick to produce and sold well thanks to their pick-up-and-play hallmarks. Those that demanded rapid reflexes, reaping instant gratification and 'one more go' appeal.

So far so predictable. What sets Cobra apart is that the coder/designer of the game for the lead platform, Jonathan 'Joffa' Smith, had no interest in mirroring the movie from the outset. He truly had his heart set on creating a Mario style platformer, driven by the desire to showcase his and the Spectrum's technical prowess. That the finished product - produced over the course of three months - ended up sporting a picture of no holds barred 'zombie squad' LA cop, Sly Stallone, was entirely incidental. Had it not shared the title of the movie and poster design (no contribution from Bob Wakelin this time) you wouldn't have the faintest clue that the two things were in any way analogous. Top Gun was the other conversion option on the table at the time, though I'd imagine even Joffa - as talented as he was

- would have struggled to apply the plumber brothers' charm to flying a Navy Tomcat.



"The Cobra scrolling was just a programming exercise that was shoe-horned into a game. I wanted to do a 'Mario' style game on the Spectrum and it just so happened that me and musician Martin Galway ended up in various cinemas and private in-house mini-cinemas in London and had private showings of films before their release and I had to pick between Top Gun or Cobra. I didn't like either, but I thought I could make fun of Cobra - and get away with it." - **Interview with ZX Spectrum Games blog (September 2009)**





*You'll want to get that Popeye arm checked out with a doctor.  
Who's going to deliver the cure if you're diseased?*

"Myself and the musician, Martin Galway, were treated to a private showing months before it was released. We also saw Top-Gun on the same day, again before its release date, though I had nothing to do with any of the computer versions." - **Joffa Smith**

Having acquired the Cobra movie license, then production manager, Gary Bracey, appears to have given Joffa carte blanche freedom to do whatever he liked with it. It would be tricky to argue that it suffered as a result - the movie is an insipid, trope-laden cops versus bad guys cookie-cutter affair that cinema-goers had seen a hundred times before, even in 1986.

Funnily enough, Sly agrees that mistakes were made and plans to fix them with a spin-off series revival...

"And I blew it. My personal life got in the way. But we're trying to bring it back as a streaming TV series. Bring out the zombie squad. I'm long gone, but the idea is really good."

Emanating from such an incoherent, throwaway movie it's surprising that anyone bothered to catch it. You could rename any muscle-bound one-man-army brawler game to match and no-one would question the logic.

"Paul Owen's mistake(s) was/is that he thinks Cobra was actually written, whereas, in reality, it just appeared out of nowhere." - **Joffa Smith (Ocean reunion forum)**

Hence we play as someone who looks a smidgeon like stoic LAPD lieutenant Marion 'Cobra' Cobretti, trundle around various vaguely appropriate-ish landscapes head-butting baddies, scale obstacles, collect oversized pulsating beef burgers and rifle through the juicy morsels to recover heavy artillery surreptitiously hidden within. As you do.



In fact, in a rare illustration of deliberate movie-game correlation, the burgers were inspired by a scene that takes place in a restaurant where Sly can be spotted examining a novelty rubber burger found on the counter. You'll find my capture of that on YouTube for your delight and delectation.

To complete a level all four burgers must be harvested and all villains vanquished. Oh, and don't forget to rescue Ingrid - you can't have her showing up at that robot photo-shoot gig all blood-splattered and holey. According to the manual, "she will follow you if you touch her". Good luck with that, she's as feisty as an Amazon virago, towering above Sly who had to be artificially elevated when filming together.

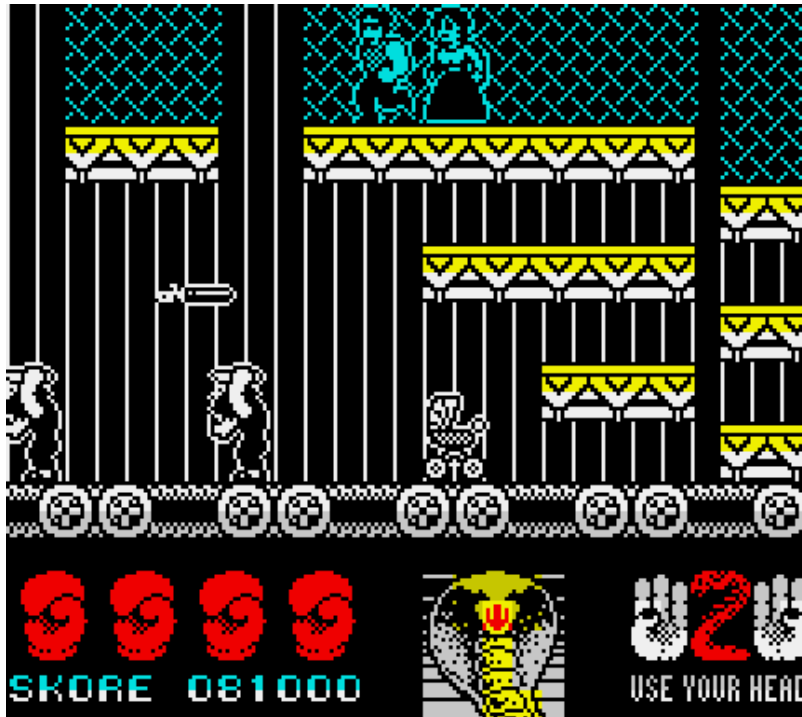


*To answer your question: No, I'm not kidding. This happens.*

Further advice includes, "Be careful, Ingrid gets upset, if you try to kill her she may wander away. She may also get abducted by the enemy."



Women, eh. There's no pleasing them. It's a sorry affair if you can't shoot your girlfriend without her storming off in a sulky tantrum like a big soft baby!



Still struggling to avoid a trip to the dog house? Here are some more helpful hints and tips...

"Avoid hurting Ingrid, she runs away.

Duck down to avoid flying objects.

Remember the location of each beefburger and the weapon type it contains.

Save 'the best' weapon till last as the action heats up towards the end.

Don't stay in one place too long!"



Burgers aside, other elements have more in common with Rocky, such as the boxing gloves representing our life count, and the out of control prams we vault over to survive. Yes, *really*. Sly became a daddy in Rocky II (1979). We don't see him alongside a pushchair in the movie, yet several press-kit lobby cards issued for PR purposes at the time depict Rocky with his wife, Adrian, dog, Butkus, and new-born baby son, Robert.

"I wasn't particularly impressed with the movie, so I decided to make it more comical in nature. I added elements from other Stallone films, like the boxing gloves that were used to indicate 'lives', and made it incredibly fast and furious." -

**Joffa Smith**

Some of the ditties heard between levels are also more in-tune with Rocky than Cobra, the latter lacking the requisite degree of feel-good hum-ability. According to Joffa, "The title music was an early version of a tune later used for Ocean's Commodore 64 conversion of Arkanoid."

Very little music is evident beyond the title screen, overbearing sound effects taking precedence. Every footstep, as well as

weapon discharge, is punctuated with a nerve-jangling screech that's best muted.

"I remember someone threw the power switch off by accident. Martin Galway was doing the Cobra music on my set-up at the time, and lost all the work he'd done! This probably explains why that particular tune isn't up to his usual standard." - **ZX Spectacle interview (January 2001)**

Ironically the hodgepodge assemblage is a fitting homage to Cobra; a movie that was tweaked and meddled with so much that the finished cut was barely recognisable as the script Sly set out to bring to life. Cobra is actually the radically divergent interpretation of Beverly Hills Cop we never got to see, believe it or not. Sly was originally slated to play the lead role ultimately awarded to Eddie Murphy, though resigned from the project when he was told his script rewrites - dropping the comedy, transforming it into an all-out action movie - weren't appreciated. Rather than discard his budget-incompatible revision it was reworked to become Cobra - a far more gory and violent proposition than the light and fluffy cop caper movie Beverly Hills became.

Serving as writer (with assistance from Paula Gosling's 1974 novel 'Fair Game'), leading star and unofficial director, even with the authority to tailor Cobra to complement his strengths, Sly came under pressure from the MPAA and Warner Bros. to sanitise the movie to comply with an R rating. Left intact the MPAA intended to rule Cobra out of the box office race by hobbling it with an 'X' assessment. As a result, the most sexually and violently explicit scenes were cut, reducing the workprint edit from 130 minutes to an austere 87.

While this allowed at least an extra screening per day to be squeezed into cinema schedules, we were left with an emaciated, disjointed movie with all the depth of a desert puddle. Rather depressingly the critics recognised what a hollow shell of a story remained, as the public flocked to the cinema in their droves



regardless. A schizophrenic *critical* flop nominated for six Razzie Awards, earning \$160m at the box office from a budget of \$25!



Designing the VHS box cover to incorporate Cobra's paper-thin premise can't have been much of a challenge. Sly plays a matchstick-chewing, Aviator-sunglasses-promoting, Colt Gold Cup National Match 1911-wielding cop with burgeoning muscles and a tight vest. Marion (a nod towards John Wayne, it being his birth name as well as Cobra's), unable to cooperate with colleagues or play by the rules has been side-lined to operate as part of the 'zombie squad'; a covert unit that's alluded to several times without actually explaining what on earth it is. You'd have to do your own research to learn that this was a concept Sly replicated following a trip to Belgium where real after dark police units operate to sweep up the criminal dregs of society by any



means necessary. They'd have to keep that on the down-low. It doesn't sound very legal.

'Cobra' - as he'd rather be known for obvious reasons - is the emotionally bereft tabula rasa of a cyborg you call in to solve a crime when all other sensible options have been exhausted. Not an *actual* cyborg you understand, that's a different franchise altogether. Stallone described his character as "Bruce Springsteen with a badge."

Whenever routine police work fails miserably to get the job done his supervisors bite the bullet, conceding the inevitable collateral damage and press backlash. Guaranteed, official protocol will be shattered; expect carnage, mayhem and a blood bath payload of procedural paperwork to ensue.

Marion Cobretti: As long as we play by these bulls\*\*t rules and the killer *doesn't*, we're gonna lose.

Yes, we've heard it all before - Cobra is a loose cannon, a maverick, a one-man renegade decimation device capable of saving the universe single-handedly. Except he doesn't do anything remarkably different to police officers who lean more towards toeing the line, making a complete mockery of the premise. When absolutely necessary Cobra takes out a perp, otherwise he's more likely to be seen shooting a none too threatening Coors beer can in a supermarket - well, you've got to crowbar in the product placement obligations where you can I suppose. It's ubiquitous: ads for Pepsi, Toys R Us, Coca-Cola, King Cobra, and Miller High Life. Come on now, sing along with Geoffrey the Giraffe and pals... all under one roof. It's called Selling Out! Sell-ing Out! Sell-ing Out! Sell-ing Out!

Supermarket Killer: I got a bomb here! I'll kill her! I'll blow this whole place up!

Marion Cobretti: Go ahead. I don't shop here. All right, just relax, amigo. You wanna talk? We'll talk. I'm a sucker for good conversation.

Supermarket Killer: I don't wanna talk to you! Now, you bring in the television cameras in here now! C'mon, bring 'em in!

Marion Cobretti: Can't do that.

Supermarket Killer: Why?

Marion Cobretti: I don't deal with psychos. I put 'em away.

Supermarket Killer: I ain't no psycho, man! I'm a hero! You're looking at a f\*\*kin' hunter! I'm a hero of the New World!

Marion Cobretti: (shakes his head) You're a disease, and I'm the cure.

Supermarket Killer: Die!

(points his sawed-off shotgun at Cobretti. Cobretti throws a knife that he had concealed. It hits the thug in the abdomen)

Marion Cobretti: Drop it!

(the thug continues pointing his sawed-off shotgun at Cobretti. Cobretti fires 5 rounds from his .45 into the man, who dies. Cobretti walks over to the man & takes the bomb out of his hand)

Given that Cobra faces a 'new world order' crime syndicate of supremacist nut-jobs without a cause, hell-bent on mindless slaughter, I'd say that Sly manages to keep the death count perfectly modest (42 baddies and only 25 goodies in case you're wondering).

Marion Cobretti: Hey dirtbag, you're a lousy shot. I don't like lousy shots. You wasted a kid... for nothing. Now I think it's time to waste you.

Come on, if you're going to snuff out someone's lights, at least do it for a good reason!

Gonzales: I would kill for some...

Marion Cobretti: What?

Gonzales: Gummy bears.

Cobra doesn't approve of junk food, that's the gag. A recurring one. Except where pizza is concerned. Mr Continuity must have been called away to deal with the 'maverick' issue when this one slipped through the net. ;)



*Yes, that's sly cutting pizza with a pair of scissors. I don't have all the answers.*

Apparently the odious troupe are disciples of Darwin's survival of the fittest philosophy, intent on giving nature a helping hand by offing the weak and defenceless. That's all the motivation they need. Any further clues you'll have to glean from the deleted scenes which have since been bootlegged together to reconstruct the movie as originally intended. No official director's cut has ever been released, despite a very timorous campaign to do so. That made about as much impact as some of Cobra's limp one-liners...

Chief Halliwell: Cobretti, do know you have an attitude problem?

Marion Cobretti: Yeah, but it's just a little one.

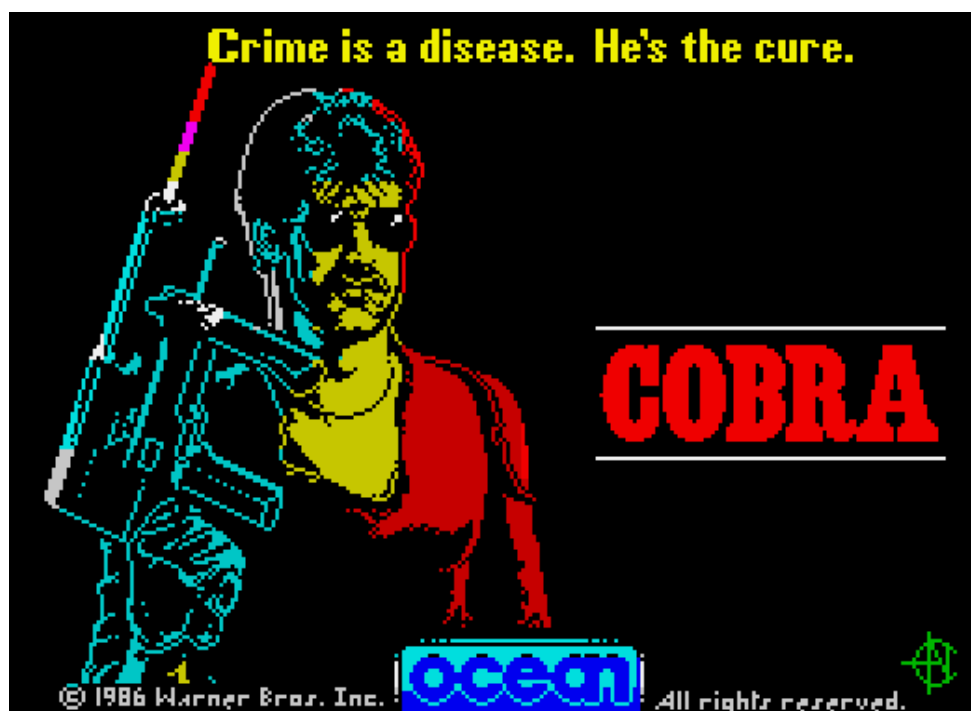


As feral thugs escalate their unprovoked slaughter sprees, model and businesswoman Ingrid Knudsen (played by Sly's then-wife Brigitte Nielsen) stumbles into a crime scene, inadvertently

becoming a known witness. Impelled by 'The Night Slasher' the degenerate neo-Fascist crew make Ingrid their number one target, ransacking the city - revealing their identities in the process! - to ensure she's found and silenced. Huh? Must have turned into a personal vendetta in the end once their faces were on the FBI's most-wanted list.

Whatever, Sly is tasked with protecting Ingrid, hitting the road together to stay out of harm's way until it all blows over... or the cold-blooded butchers are blown *up*. Obviously they become romantically entangled because that's how these situations unfold. It's the law. Sly *is* The Law!

Nancy Stalk - the Night Slasher's right-hand woman - posing as an escorting police officer, reveals their whereabouts, and hey presto, the couple's motel pit-stop is stormed. Should have acted on your instincts Sly, you knew she was dodgy. *Why* she turned to the dark side isn't explained, *nothing* is. Stop asking awkward questions! *They're* a disease and *Cobra's* the cure, that's all you need to know. He'll certainly have his work cut out!





Marion Cobretti: (narrating) In America, there's a burglary every 11 seconds, an armed robbery every 65 seconds, a violent crime every 25 seconds, a murder every 24 minutes and 250 rapes a day.

That's a rape every 345.6 seconds for the curious. Sly's maths goes a bit awry when his calculator batteries die.



Their safe-house breached Cobra and Ingrid evacuate, making a hasty getaway via a pickup truck. A noisy, chaotic chase ensues involving various pillaging Nighthawk biker wannabes, culminating in a showdown at a fully functioning, flame-grilled, sweltering steel mill reminiscent of so many warehouse/factories seen in action movie finales. Try watching it without the Terminator theme tune running amok in your discombobulated brain.



Sly tippy-toes around the industrial death-trap for ten minutes despatching minor minions before finally confronting the Night Slasher himself, known as 'Abaddon' in the script's initial draft. After a brief verbal sparring match that makes as much sense as anything else seen so far, Sly dots the tees and crosses the eyes by mounting his nemesis on a roaming meat hook of dubiously unfathomable purposes, impaling him like a helpless wriggling tuna out of water.

Night Slasher: The court is civilized, isn't it, pig?

Marion Cobretti: But I'm not. This is where the law stops and I start, sucker!



*Yes-yes, all very interesting, but don't forget to drink more Coke.*

Night Slasher: You want to go to hell? Huh, pig? You want to go to hell with me? It doesn't matter, does it? We are the hunters. We kill the weak so the strong survive. You can't stop the New World. Your filthy society will never get rid of people like us. It's breeding them! WE ARE THE FUTURE!

Marion Cobretti: No!

(aims his gun)

Marion Cobretti: You're history.

-----

Gonzales: You know, when this is over with, I'd like to celebrate, by punching a hole in Monte's chest!



Marion Cobretti: You know what the trouble with you is?  
You're too violent.

During the closing Scooby-Doo style epilogue scene, Sly punches the criminal-mollycoddling officer who's been haranguing him for riding roughshod over police protocol at every opportunity, scooting off into the sunset with Ingrid on a confiscated perpetrator's bike.



Detective Monte: Cobretti, no hard feelings. You, uh, kind of overdid it around here. I personally would have looked for a more subtle solution, but that's not your style. No hard feelings.

(Cobretti and Monte shake hands, and then Cobretti punches Monte)

Marion Cobretti: No hard feelings.



*More importantly, have you taken your prescribed dose of medicine today? Stay out of hospital, drink Coke!*

Captain Sear: If you ever want to get a transfer from the Zombie Squad to something easier, or you need anything, just say the word.

Marion Cobretti: Well, I would like to have my car replaced.

Captain Sear: We'd like to, but it's not in the budget.

The LAPD's generosity knows no bounds! In an alternative ending, it was to emerge that the thorn/colleague in Sly's side had been the ringleader all along. Hmm, not a bad idea... so it was cut. Movie studio police, Warner Bros... the gift that keeps *taking*.

Dispensing with the resolution formalities, the correlating scene of the Speccy game closes, whisking us off to stage 4, which turns out to actually equate to a return to ground zero; the beginning of the *first* level. Haha, another jolly jape! Why you wascally Wabbit Joffa, you fooled us there.

In order to record our achievement for posterity's sake, we must commit hari-kari. Whilst spending the game accruing 'skore' points to earn extra lives, our death is in contrast memorialised with an entry in the high 'morgue' table. Game *under*.

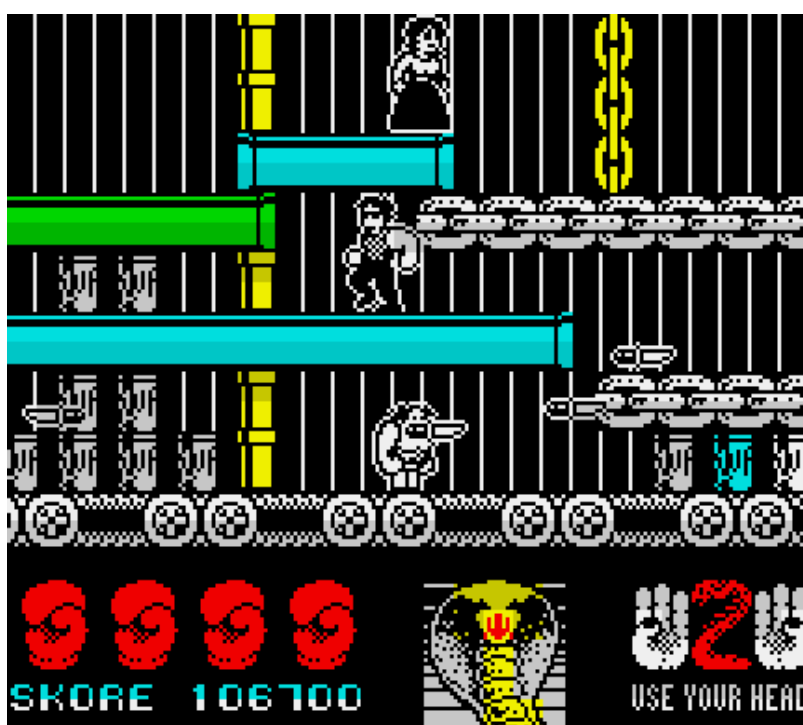


With no axes to grind in sight (his typical weapon of choice), the Night Slasher adopting the appearance of a dwarf in a wife-beater string vest, we shouldn't have expected a facsimile of the movie. Perhaps Joffa was reserving that for the remake, released to accompany the untampered-with rendition of the movie that

never landed? Funny I should mention that out of the blue as if to subtly lay the groundwork for a relevant quote from the author himself. Slick!

Naturally when ZX Spectacle in January 2001 inquired, "Don't you ever feel like throwing together another Spectrum game nowadays just for old times' sake?", Joffa's trademark off-the-wall sense of humour didn't disappoint...

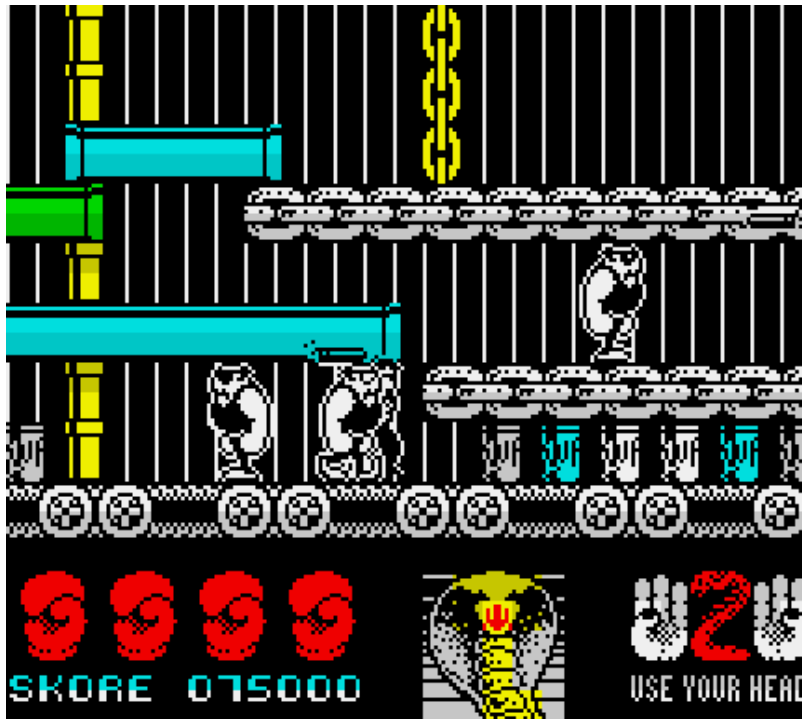
"Yes. I'd love to. The director's cut of Cobra! That might be worth looking into. Anyone got a development kit?"



Sadly, our mightily-missed Joffa is long gone - 10 years in June 2020 - so don't hold your breath for the sequel (a 2009 remake by 'Retrofingers' for Windows, yes). In any case, it's doubtful that anyone who has played the game that *did* hit the shelves (£7.95 from a stockist near you) would be craving a second instalment - the mere humans among us couldn't hope to ever finish it.

Cobra is so infuriatingly, impossibly tough it's a feat in itself to take more than a few steps without perishing thanks to the one-nudge-and-you're-dead system and measly allocation of three

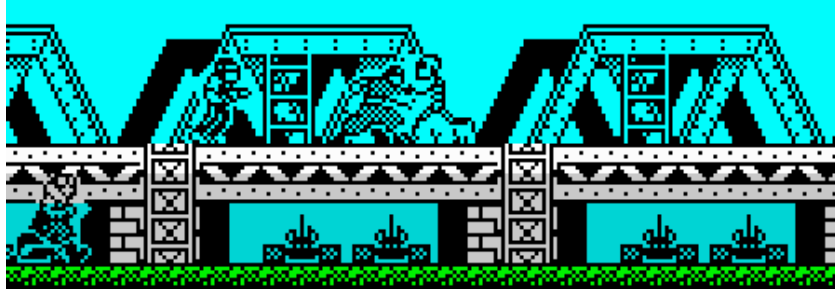
boxing gloves (lives). Technically that's *two* nudges if you're carrying a weapon; the first causes Cobra to lose it, while the *second* is the snakebite that kills him. This equally applies to having Ingrid by our side in that she'll absorb the shock for us before running off to lick her wounds.



Initially, we solely have our killer forehead for defence, any upgrades demanding the collection of beef burgers. Covert bullet-encased armament delivery mechanisms that become more sparsely sited as we progress. What's hidden within is predetermined so worth memorising - an invincibility pill or a potent, generous artillery selection veritably exploited by Sly in the movie; throwing knives, grenades, a pistol, and a laser-sighted machine gun (a Jati-Matic) activated via the 'murder' rather than fire button.

'Stab to start' takes a similar tone, a throwback to Green Beret, also coded by Joffa in 1986, though on that occasion under the Imagine label.





"Don't push me", another status area message is clearly a quote lifted from First Blood (1982). All Rambo wanted was to return home, put Vietnam behind him... and go hitch-hiking in Madison County. Then POW! No, *not* in the Batman sense, Rambo was a prisoner of war. Why do I bother?



*An unbranded cup, really? Talk about wasting the perfect marketing opportunity!*

On the contrary, when redefining our keys we're instructed to "push me". A nice touch since such a provision isn't tendered in all Spectrum games. Often we're lumbered with a predetermined,

illogical configuration that'll have us playing finger Twister as we try in vain to get to grips with them.



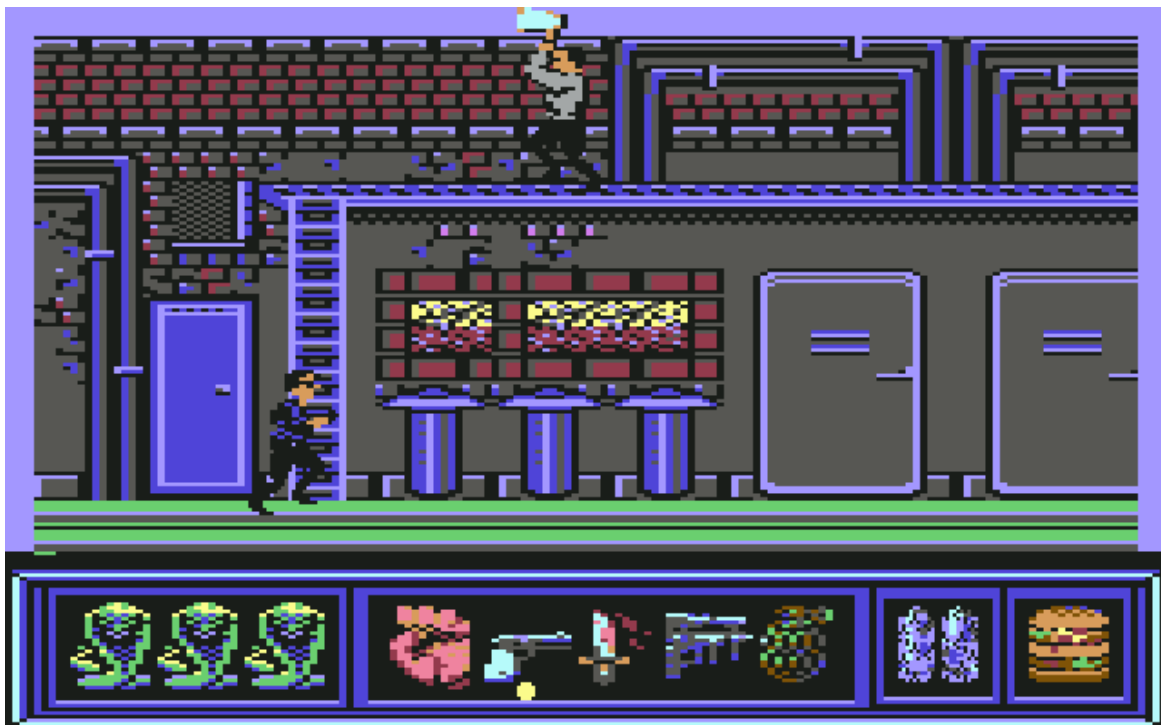
*Giant magic mushrooms! No doubt escapees from Pud Pud.*

Whenever we engage with a weapon, a rubber duck - the quack-o-metre - appears in the GUI to reflect the time remaining until it 'expires'. When our duck disappears it's Cobra who'll be doing the ducking. Obviously. Well, how else would you depict that? A Fair Game - the novel by Paula Gosling on which Cobra is based - is known as 'A Running Duck' in the UK so maybe that's the more likely connection. Such bath toys represent the player's life-count in Joffa's Terra Cresta so clearly he had an affinity for them.





Weapons, opponents and presentation vary depending on the port in question, each worked on by independent teams, yet roughly modelled on Joffa's original design. In the C64 game, for instance, punches are substituted for head-butts, and there's less emphasis on quirky humour.



All the nose-diving birds can be explained by the movie's opening scene in which they are repeatedly displaced from their perches around the city by unexpected commotion. I think the intention was to contrive a foreboding atmosphere of impending turmoil. For anyone who missed such delicate signals, there's all the axe-bludgeoning bloodshed that follows shortly.



Not that inclusion of birds would ever top the list of strange occurrences; they've been fairly frequent tormentors in video game history, possibly beginning with Gremlin's Potty Pigeon? Alfred Hitchcock has a lot to answer for!



In the Spectrum game, we face assailants armed with knives and missiles, though also incidental 'enemies' such as prams that stun our protagonist without terminally mowing him down. You might imagine that the women too are simply bystanders, civilians who need to be protected, or at the very least not fired upon. Not necessarily - some members of the fairer sex are actually tooled up with bazookas and aren't shy about giving you a lesson in limb separation.

I imagine Joffa hadn't completely abandoned the idea of drawing parallels with the movie since Cobra's secondary adversary is, in fact, a 'lady' with murder in her heart. Why they all appear to be wearing full length, puffy wild west garb dresses in 1986 is anyone's guess. It's a conservative style similar to that of Rocky's better half, Adriiiiiiiiiiaaaaaaan, so perhaps an extension of the boxing allusion. I suppose it swerved the necessity to animate their legs and feet, which would have *slashed* the development time. Whatever the inspiration everything is appropriately drawn in an endearing caricature style that spells fun with a capital C. You know, for cartoon.

"Sure, Cobra isn't very original, but it's furious fun which will test you to the limits. It's also one of the better film-linked titles. In a market which has become constipated with tie-ins, Cobra is a dose of syrup of figs!" - **Your Sinclair (80%, February 1987)**

Nevertheless, above all, Speccy Cobra is fondly remembered for its advanced *technical* achievements; namely full colour, super-smooth parallax scrolling. A show-stopping coup assumed impossible in 1986 harnessing all the hardware grunt of Clive Sinclair's video game system 'toy', first unveiled in 1982!

As much as I love it, the Speccy was considered the runt of the 8-bit litter, hamstrung by its often monochrome graphics and underwhelming bleepy-blippy audio, mercilessly overshadowed by the C64's far superior SID chip. Most games were of the flip-screen variety so as not to overburden the humble Speccy's processing capacity. Despite making it dance to his tune, Joffa wasn't a raving evangelist for the system...

"The Spectrum didn't have any redeeming features at all, really, but it was fast. It was fun trying to invent new ways of doing things. Of course everyone hated the awful sound and the dreaded attribute clash!" - **Interview with ZX Golden Years**

Moon Alert demonstrated that implementing the parallax effect in Spectrum games was feasible, yet it had never been executed quite as seductively as in Cobra.



I'll let Joffa lead you behind the red velvet curtain to elucidate the inner workings...

"The parallax FX was just a 'bit' 'rolled' at half speed and written to the 'blank block' to produce a vertical line - other FX could have been done - but this was okay and I was running out of time to finish the game. Given more time I could have done more. I wanted to have a bitmap picture in the background! But it looks okay.

Another week and it would have been AWESOME! But you have to let go, or rather it gets taken from you. That's it! Gone! No game testing. Just gone! But this is other people's money and if they say stop - you stop. And there is a back catalogue of stuff to be done before Christmas.

The scrolling looks smooth because it is quick! But with many restrictions! Hopefully no-one notices these imperfections - part of the design! HA!"

**Interview with ZX Spectrum Games blog (September 2009)**

Still struggling to get your head around it? Can you elaborate on that a bit Joffa? I'm totally on the same page, it's just for the dim proles reading. ;)

"The game featured a unique (at the time) screen display mechanism. This meant pre-generating the code to draw and scroll the background images and involved pointing the Z80 processor's 'stack' at the screen RAM and 'pushing' predefined 16-bit registers onto it. This was very restricting but extremely fast. A single 'push' instruction will draw 16 pixels in one go, automatically moving the pointer to the next screen position."

**Joffa Smith writing on his own, now defunct Tiscali web site**

"Though very Green Beretish in style, I think that Cobra has a lot of points in its favour. The graphics are superb and the scrolling is very effective. Loads of colour and some very good tunes have been included. It took me a long time to actually get into Green Beret and I think that that's one of the reasons why it didn't receive a Smash. That problem, I think is overcome because the similarity means that playing techniques are the same to an extent. Cobra is a good game; nice graphics, well used colour and a fair share of playability." - **Crash (93%, issue 35)**



*The Night Slasher has clearly been attending the Clark Kent School of Cunning Disguises.*

Joffa's Ocean colleagues similarly struggled to grasp the trick behind the miracle at the time. All in awe of his prodigious talent, some tried to pick Joffa's brains, whilst others only sought to pass off the programming wizardry as their own ingenuity!

Anything you'd like to add former Ocean C64 coder, Paul Hughes?

"Best Spectrum programmer. Ever. I must admit there was something of hero worship going on when I first met him. He



could rattle games out in weeks and they all played well, had great graphics and ran like a bat out of hell. His scrolling on Spectrum Cobra was nothing short of genius." - **Interview with C64.com**

"Yeah, the hard guy is back and beating the insides of your Speccy into shape. What a game, but why is Mr Macho scared of babies? All in all the game is extremely playable, it has all the good points of say Green Beret and Commando plus a lot more although I can see myself getting a bit tired with it after a while. The graphics are truly the best that I've seen in a 'hard guy game', everything is detailed and well animated, the scrolling of the screen is superb. The sound too is second to none, there is a multitude of tunes on the title screen, during the game and, even one when the game is paused. This is in my view the best smash of the issue, we'll have to wait for a while to see a game that betters this. Go out and buy it now, no self-respecting games player should be without a copy." - **Crash (93%, issue 35)**

With deadlines looming Joffa was obliged to work swiftly, thus in the absence of thorough playtesting the inevitable struck. As Joffa once confessed, "There is a bug on level three whereby if you kill the 'Night Slasher', whilst invincible, the stage refuses to end."

An incredibly short game should you cheat, ironically few would have reached that far to notice. Dumbstruck by its tight coding, preposterous speed and superb presentation, the critical reception was extraordinarily positive. Former Imagine and Denton Designs founder/coder Steve Cain for one was an enthusiastic advocate regardless of Cobra's dramatic deviation from the movie...

"I think the only good license I've seen recently is Cobra. The graphics are really bloody great but the game hasn't got much to do with the film."





*There he goes again, Sly is forever dropping e's. Allegedly.*

Crash magazine fervently concurred...

"I loaded up Cobra with some trepidation, what would it be like? Well to put your minds at rest, I found Cobra to be a brilliant mindless 'kill everything in sight' game. The presentation is superb, and Ocean have made full use of the film tie in; even down to defining a 'murder' key, and having colour/mono, sound/mute options."



*Colour clash or not, you decide. Nice.*

"The sound is extremely well done, with lots of decent ditties and spot effects. The graphics are very well detailed and realistic, and the explosions are very well animated. The scrolling is very smooth and fast, and the characters move about very quickly. This all means that there's no time to think, you just have to head butt or murder everyone you see. Cobra is very addictive and well worth the asking price."

**- Crash (93%, issue 35)**

Cobra was quite rightly acknowledged as the 'Best Platform Game' of 1986 by Crash magazine (issue 35) and is still fondly remembered and *played* to this day. Contemporary Spectrum game coders continue to study Joffa's work, happily admitting they owe a debt of gratitude to his fabulously eccentric imagination and extraordinary triumphs. Revelling in nonsense just for the hell of it, he was my kinda nutter.

It goes without saying that 99.99% of those who enjoyed or learned from Cobra the game have still not watched the movie,

and have no intention of doing so until it's rewritten, re-casted and rebooted. I'll leave you to debate who should play Marion.

